

News Release

U of M, Crookston Sophomore Michael McMahon, St. Paul, Minn., Completes Student Solo Flight

By Itollefts on Tuesday, October 23, 2012



Michael McMahon, St. Paul, Minn., a sophomore at the University of Minnesota, Crookston, recently completed his student solo flight. A natural resources aviation major, McMahon's advisor is Mike Vivion, chief pilot on the Crookston campus. His flight instructor is Chase Enghauser, a 2012 graduate of the U of M, Crookston with a business management aviation degree. The milestone flight was completed at the Thief River Falls [Minn.] Regional Airport due to runway construction activity at the Crookston Municipal Airport.

The first student solo flight is a significant accomplishment and cannot be overemphasized.

Landing an aircraft involves difficult and complex eye-hand coordination. A student pilot begins flight training by learning a wide variety of tasks of which landing is one of the most difficult. As flight training progresses, the ability to solo is largely predicated upon the flight instructor's assessment of the student's landings. Consistency is critical and sometimes one of the most difficult to achieve as even the best pilot can attest.



Around the middle of a private pilot's flight training, the instructor flies with the student having him/her land. The instructor will exit the airplane and endorse the student pilot certificate and logbook for solo. With that designation, the budding aviator is sent off for three trips around the traffic pattern each followed by that all important landing.



Following American aviation tradition, removing a new pilot's shirt tail is a sign of confidence by the instructor in the student following the completion of the first solo flight. It stems from the days when a student sat in the front seat of the aircraft with the instructor behind. Radios were not a part of early aviation making it necessary for the instructor to tug on the student pilot's shirt tail to get his/her attention. A successful first solo flight is significant in that it means the student can fly without the instructor, and consequently, no longer needs a shirt tail. In observance of this tradition, aviation students at the U of M, Crookston have their shirt tails cut off by the proud instructor, and they are displayed at the Crookston Municipal Airport.

The University of Minnesota, Crookston's aviation program is a partnership in which aviation fundamentals are provided by the University of North Dakota (UND) Aerospace Foundation. Students have the option to choose tracks in agricultural aviation, business aviation, law enforcement aviation, or natural resources aviation. To learn more, visit www.umcrookston.edu/aviation.



Today the University of Minnesota, Crookston delivers 26 bachelor's degree programs, 18 minors, and 39 concentrations on campus--as well as 10 degrees online--in the areas of agriculture and natural resources; business; liberal arts and education; and math, science and technology. With an enrollment of 1,800 undergraduates from 25 countries and 40 states, the Crookston campus offers a supportive, close-knit atmosphere that leads to a prestigious University of Minnesota degree. "Small Campus. Big Degree." To learn more, visit www.umcrookston.edu.

In the photos:

Top, left: Michael McMahon

Top, right: Chase Enghauser (left) shakes the hand of his first solo flight student Michael McMahon after his successful completion of the important milestone flight.

Center, left: Enghauser cuts the shirttail of McMahon according to American aviation tradition.

Bottom, left: McMahon's signed shirttail is ready to go on display at the airport.

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